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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM MOPS MARR UG CG SU

SUBJECT: UGANDA/DRC: OPERATION RUDIA II UPDATE (MAY 15, 2009)

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: This cable is a periodic update on the regional military operation against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) known as Operation Rudia II. This report is not meant to provide an overarching narrative or polished analysis of the operation, but rather offers spot information gleaned in Uganda only, from credible U.S. Mission sources here. We recognize the regional scope of the operation and the fact that our sources may be limited in their knowledge and perspective on Rudia II. End Summary.

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MILITARY UPDATE
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¶2. (S NF) The Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) reported continued progress against LRA targets near Bitima and Faradje, DRC. From May 4 to May 15, twelve LRA fighters were killed, nine weapons recovered, and communications equipment, solar panels, and Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) uniforms seized. The UPDF attacked the LRA group led by Lt.Col. Charles Arop near Faradje. The UPDF believes that the group had just picked up supplies because abductees were carrying large amounts of food in sacks. The source of the re-supply is not known. Between April 25 and May 1, 19 abductees were rescued, primarily Congolese. During the same period, two of LRA leader Joseph Kony's wives, each with a child, were captured when they refused to surrender.

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POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT
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¶3. (SBU) LRA Spokesman David Matsanga continued his efforts to obtain a cease-fire. On May 8, Matsanga sent a letter to President Museveni making a "final" appeal for a cease-fire. Matsanga claims to have delivered a letter from Riek Machar, the Government of Southern Sudan mediator, to Kony. Matsanga claimed that Kony has agreed to release the sick, wounded, and non-combatants and that a written letter from Kony would follow. Likewise, Matsanga claims that Kony will call UN Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joachim Chissano. Matsanga gave Museveni a May 17 deadline to respond.

¶4. (C) Government of Uganda (GOU) officials do not take Matsanga's maneuvering seriously, but are more concerned about the next moves of the Acholi diaspora and Khartoum officials. Henry Okello Oryem, Uganda's Minister of State for International Relations, told us that Matsanga is desperate because he does not have contact with Kony and cannot "deliver" any LRA officials. The GOU is more concerned about the re-supply of the LRA and the potential emergence of a new rebel group, according to Oryem. Several prominent Acholi, including Ladit Balgara, a wealthy member of the Acholi diaspora who is closely tied to Khartoum officials, may have "written off" Kony, but are still interested in opposing Museveni and destabilizing southern

Sudan. Matsanga, who is from eastern Uganda, is despised by the Acholi, according to Oryem, and would lose his bully pulpit and potential access to funding to pay off his mounting debts in Kenya.

¶5. (C) There are other indications that the Acholi diaspora may have calculated that Kony is a spent force. Military and elected civilian officials in Gulu report that Patrick Komekesh, who was arrested in March, admitted to being a low level operative helping to mobilize support on the ground in Acholiland for this new group. Acholi paramount chief Rwot David Onen Acana told us that Jane Anwyar, who heads a pro-LRA non-governmental organization, was seeking the support from the Acholi traditional and religious leaders to help save Kony and then start a new movement for the Acholi. (Note: Kony would not be part of the new group. End Note.) Acana said that Kony's only way out is to sign the peace agreement. He also told Anwyar that the Acholi diaspora needed to return to Uganda and assist the northern recovery rather than support rebellion.

HOOVER